

Global Travel Stories Around the 11th Century

Research Thesis

Presented in partial fulfillment of the requirements for graduation with research distinction in
History in the undergraduate colleges of The Ohio State University

By

Li Dong

The Ohio State University

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Project Advisors: Professor David J. Staley, Department of History
Professor Sara M. Butler, Department of History

A Story Map

Global Travel Stories

Li Dong

Welcome!

This *Story Map* project is my attempt to tell the story about global travelers, mainly focused around the 11th century, and their connections through an interactive way.

Although titled as *Global*, I will only cover a few stories from Africa, Asia, and Europe, and the intercommunications between these places. In my mind, they will be different from the travel stories such as between England and France or China and Korea. Although the communications between these places are also *international* by the modern standard, they belong to the same cultural area (link: <https://www.britannica.com/topic/culture-area>) and share a similar worldview. Through the interactions with the others, the collisions provide as many challenges as opportunities.

Please scroll down to the next section - Forward.

Forward

(1) Why Global Travel Stories?

My idea about this project started when I was taking a course in digital history, a reading seminar focused on the European and non-European discoveries of each other between the 15th to the 18th century and a manuscript course which I mainly focused my research on a medieval world map.



This is the image I used for my last thesis about the interaction between the Persian embassy and the European courts. This painting showed the Persian embassy rode alongside the Polish nobles. You can see their costumes are very different. (image

source: https://teheran.msz.gov.pl/en/c/MOBILE/bilateral_cooperation/history/polish_persian_relations/)

My research paper for the reading seminar focused on the first Persian embassy to Europe and specifically, the story of a Persian Catholic convert living in Spain. The experience of the research on European and non-European interactions made me desire to do more study in this area. Combining my interest in premodern history in general, I decided to take a look at the international communications between various groups, especially those that are *not well known* to the general audience.

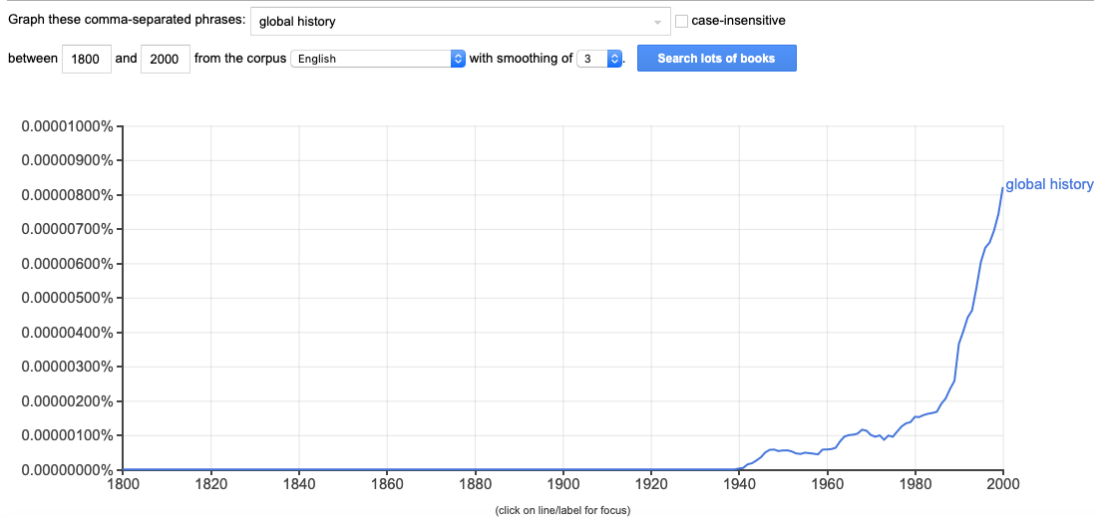
(2) Why around the 11th century?

In my first thought, the time period for my project should be prior to the *Age of Exploration* ([link: https://www.britannica.com/topic/European-exploration/The-Age-of-Discovery](https://www.britannica.com/topic/European-exploration/The-Age-of-Discovery)), when the Europeans discovered the other peoples and places through mainly naval navigations. These discoveries, or explorations, were predominantly unidirectional, Europeans to non-Europeans. However, through my research, international communications before the Age of Exploration involved lots of multi-directional exchanges, which were initiated by not only the Europeans but also the Arabs, Persians, Mongolians, Chinese and many other groups of people. Medieval is a common term to describe the time period between the classical age and early modern period in some cultural traditions. However, the term 'medieval' is not universally applied and the lengths of 'middle ages' for different civilizations are different. For this reason, I forsook the idea to use 'medieval' and turned to look for a more specific time period.

At this moment, the year 1000 A.D. came into my attention. Argued by some scholars such as Valerie Hansen ([link: https://www.birmingham.ac.uk/schools/historycultures/departments/history/events/2018/cesma1710.aspx](https://www.birmingham.ac.uk/schools/historycultures/departments/history/events/2018/cesma1710.aspx)) recently (the book is yet to be published), the year 1000 is the beginning of globalization. The use of the term 'globalization', as per my understanding, describes the relatively extensive networks among various empires, kingdoms and other entities, involving population movements, the exchanges of ideas, commodities, and etc. Although the globalization then could not be compared to globalization today, I would like to say through various examples that the global society was well connected, through *the spread of religions and trades & diplomacy, conquests, and mass migration*.

My project is not to test and verify the theory of whether the 11th century is the start of globalization. Instead, my goal is to find and analyze examples of international communications and I think around the 11th century is a perfect period to discuss.

(3) Why Global?



This Google Ngram image shows us that from 1940 onward, people, in general, show greater interest in global history

Source: <https://books.google.com/ngrams/graph?>

`content=global+history&year_start=1800&year_end=2000&corpus=15&smoothing=3&share=&direct_url=t1%3B%2Cglobal%20history%3B%2C`
 (link: https://books.google.com/ngrams/graph?content=global+history&year_start=1800&year_end=2000&corpus=15&smoothing=3&share=&direct_url=t1%3B%2Cglobal%20history%3B%2Cc0)

Going global means that I have to find similarities within the differences because the peoples and their social entities in the 11th century differed from each other greatly from lifestyles, eating habits, rituals, beliefs, types of government, ways of thinking, philosophy...just name a few. The similarities reside within the critical reasons when people left their homeland and interacted with the other people under the situation that their movements involved many hardships like the lack of transportation and information. I am interested in identifying these reasons, the driving forces behind the activities. My results will be discussed extensively in the following tabs.

(4) Why the Story Map?

As I have mentioned above, my idea toward the projects came from three classes - the reading seminar, digital history, and the manuscript class. After doing research in a medieval Mappa Mundi by Andreas Walsperger in the 15th century (image below), I was thrilled to find how a map could be useful and meaningful in so many ways. For example, world maps, made in different time and place, reflected different ideologies of the cartographers and their societies. This one, by placing 'Heaven' as a big red castle on the left and Jerusalem roughly in the middle, shows the Christian view of the world.



Mappa Mundi by Andreas Walsperger. Image
 source: https://farm4.staticflickr.com/3645/3418564514_6a3f995c97_b.jpg (link: https://farm4.staticflickr.com/3645/3418564514_6a3f995c97_b.jpg)

Therefore, I decided to add the elements of the maps into my research. I believe that the maps are visual and engaging and they can render a lot of information. For my project specifically, many places that I will mention later will be pinned down in the maps and their relations can be connected using lines. Words and images can be used alongside the pins to better interpret the background stories. With all the places on the map, I hope I can better present the global connectivity between the places and the peoples.

In the past, most maps were made by the professional cartographers and hand-drawn; today, we can make the maps online in an easier way. Making a map is my initial thoughts on using a digital tool. After I studied digital history, I started to realize that my whole project can be visualized through tools such as the Story Map.

Studying digital history also changes my way of being a history student. I used to only know and practice the most traditional way of studying history. Although I also did research online and wrote papers using computers, what I wrote were only limited to me, my professors and maybe some of my classmates. I could not and have not thought about share my thoughts to a boarder audience.

We live in a digital age now and society requires everything to be digitized. We also live in a modern world that more people need to know and deserve to know the past for the benefits of themselves and society. Now I understand that my main goal of studying history is to share my passion for more people and using the digital way is my best choice.

The digital history course teaches me to use digital tools such as Google Ngram and Voyant Tools to analyze and visualize the historical data, and present the multi-media history story.

Story Map is also one of the tools that I have practiced before. Its advantages are in its title: Story + Map. My goals are that through my project, my story part can be reader-friendly and my map part can be interactive and easy to read.

Please proceed next to the next part - Introduction.



Introduction

Travel is common in today's world. With different reasons, we travel to another city, state, or country to study, work or simply enjoy ourselves. With the development of technology, long-distance travel becomes more accessible.

However, five hundred or even one thousand years before us, travel was a much more difficult task for our ancestors. Travel, as defined by the *Oxford English Dictionary* originally means travail, which is associated with labor and suffering. It involves a long time of preparation, the conditions on the road were unpredictable and some of them were moved forcibly, as slaves or prisoners.

Living in the different parts of the world, travel also meant differently to people. The seafaring nations and nomads such as Peloponnesians and the Mongolians were constantly in the move and those lived in the mountains found it is hard to communicate with the outer world.

Only a few could go far during the premodern time. The international or even intercontinental travels were conducted by a small and special group who had strong wills and abilities that made their travels possible.

I hope through my interactive project I can help more audience understand the nature of travel for premodern peoples and to make comparisons and connections for those have different reasons to move.

Who traveled globally and why are they important to us?

Just like people living in any period of time, those who during the middle ages have multi-reasons to travel depending on their purposes, social status, education levels, wealth, occupations and etc. Every person might have a reason to travel and many of them traveled often.

However, the long-distance journey, especially those cross-continental ones among Asia, Africa, and Europe, is for a long time an intimidating task. Oftentimes the travelers would take as long as months or even years on road, they would suffer from dangers, heats or cold, hunger and thirst, and poor health.

Among these long-distance travelers are priests, nomads, conquerors, and the conquered, merchants and many other kinds of people. Although many of them did not leave their names or any record, their movements can be traced by what they brought, information and goods. Some of them left huge impacts on human or even global history and many of the influences still linger in our society.

21st century's world is more globalized than ever before after we witness various kinds of improvements in technology. Communications around the globe are also much more available. Nevertheless, the increasing number of connections also leads to an increasing number of misunderstandings and panics. Not everyone welcomes a globalized world and many would raise doubts on "the others", who they define as not them. The problem also arises when some people have a hard time defining themselves.

History might not be the solution but it is a mirror. What happens to us also happens to those who lived a thousand years earlier with few variants. While cross-continental communications became more available for them than for their ancestors, they also lived in a more dynamic society than ever before. They also experienced the spreads of religions, military conquests, international trades, and migrations that on a scale they never saw before.

Therefore, if the topic attracts you so far, I encourage you to continue to read a few examples of global travel stories and relate some of them to the news in today's world and to our daily lives.

Please scroll to the next section - Previous Studies - to continue.

Religion

Christianity



Look at the picture on the right, and you'll see an image of a Mongol Khan of the Keraites, Toghrul, depicted as the legendary "Prester John". He was shown wearing a cardinal's gown and those on his right were holding the Nestorian Cross.

How are a Mongol Khan, Prester John, and Nestorian Christianity connected?

The Mongolians' traditional belief is Mongolian Shamanism or Tengrism. However, some tribes, including the Keraites, were converted to Nestorian Christianity around the 11th century.

Through the words of Bar Hebraeus, a 13th century Syriac Orthodox historian, the conversion story is narrated in the following way:

'In that time 'Abdishō, Metropolitan of Merw [Note: Merv ([link: https://www.britannica.com/place/Merv](https://www.britannica.com/place/Merv))], ... wrote and informed the Catholics (i.e. the Patriarch) that while the king of a people called Keraites...was hunting in one of the high mountains of his country, he was overcome by a violent snow-storm, and wandered hopelessly out of the way. When he lost all hope of salvation, a saint appeared to him in a vision and said to him, "If you believe in Christ, I will lead you to the right direction, and you will not die here." When he promised him that he would become a lamb in the Christian sheepfold, he directed him and led him to salvation; and when he reached his tents in safety, he summoned the Christian merchants who were there, and discussed with them the question of faith, and they answered him that this could not be accomplished except through baptism. He took a Gospel from them, and lo he is worshipping it every day; and now he has summoned me to repair to him, or to send him a priest to baptise him. He also made enquiries from me concerning fasting, and said to me, "Apart from meat and milk, we have no other food; how could we then fast"; he also told me that the number of those who were converted with him reached two hundred thousand. ' (Chronicon Syriacum)

(Source: Christians in Asia before 1500, P227)

At first glance, the description looks like many other miracle-conversion stories. However, by analyzing the texts, we might have surprising finds. The interconnections involve three places: where the Patriarch resided (Antioch), where Abdisho the Metropolitan resided (Merv) and where the Khan resided (in now Mongolia). First of all, Merv is a crucial spot in history, located in today's Turkmenistan and was a major spot on Silk Road. In 1037, the city was peacefully taken over by the Seljuk Turks from the Arabs and entered a highly developing era. Antioch was called "the cradle of Christianity" and was an important trading port from the Hellenistic era. Byzantine Empire controlled the place shortly

from the early the 10th century before it was captured by the Seljuk Turks in 1084. Keraites' territory was connected to them by "Christian merchants". The conversion of the Keraites, therefore, shows beyond the miraculous story.

It shows that the Mongol Tribes in the far east have active commercial connections to the west. Not only did the merchants exchange the goods, but also they bring the new faith to the Keraites.

A detail also caught my attention. After the Khan asked how should his people do about fasting since their only food sources are meat and milk, the Patriarch replied in the following way: 'As to the Fast of Lent, they should abstain in it from meat, but they should be given permission to drink milk, if as they say, Lent food is not found in their country.' (Christians in Asia before 1500) Also in Mari ibn Suleiman's The book of the Tower, he had a similar account on the issue of fasting. The example of the Fast of Lent shows how Nestorian Christianity adopt itself to suit the lifestyle of the nomads.

In general, during this period, religions often try to accommodate the needs of the new converts as they showed communications between different cultures and ethnic groups.

If you are interested in another conversion story, please scroll to the next page.

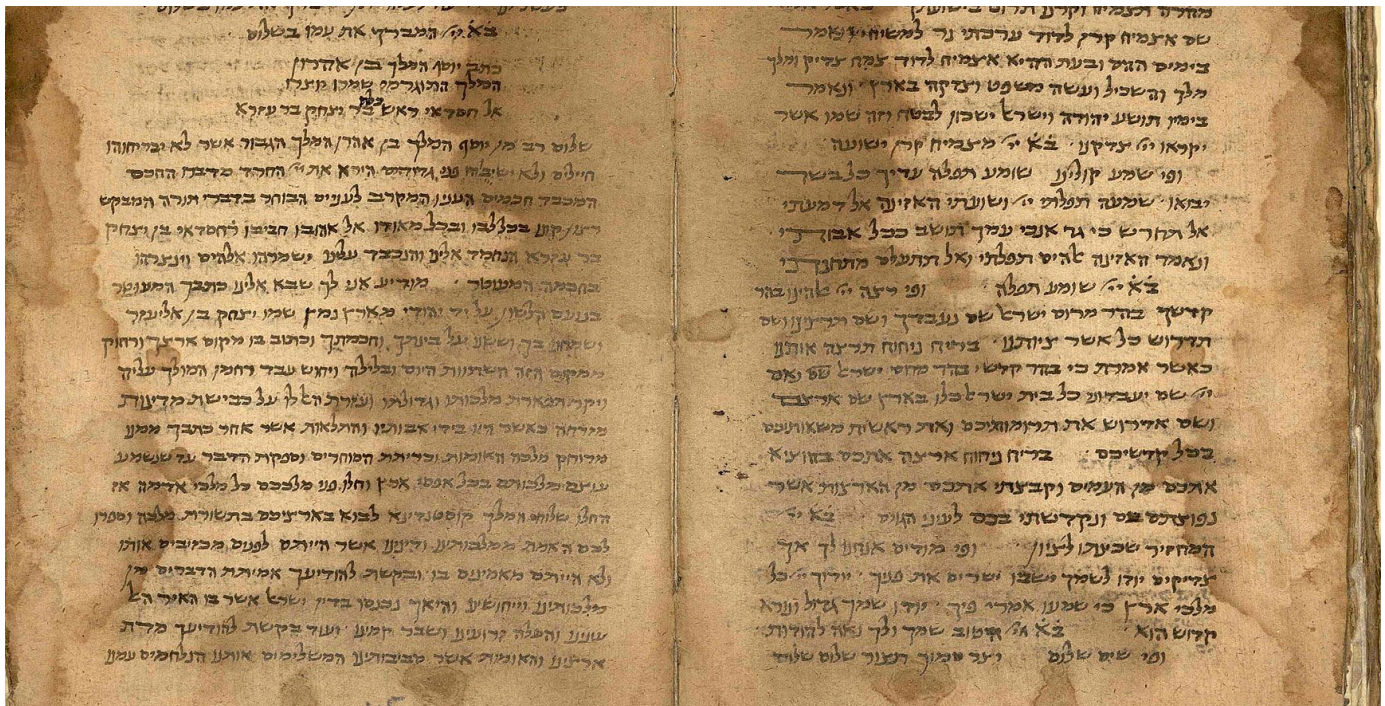
Judaism



[Image to the right: Map of Khazaria and Neighboring Empires in the Ninth and Tenth Centuries]

Similar to the experience of the Keraites, Khazars belonged to a nomadic Turkic tribe that eventually converted to Judaism. Around the end of the 10th century, Khazaria has secured its position as a Jewish kingdom.

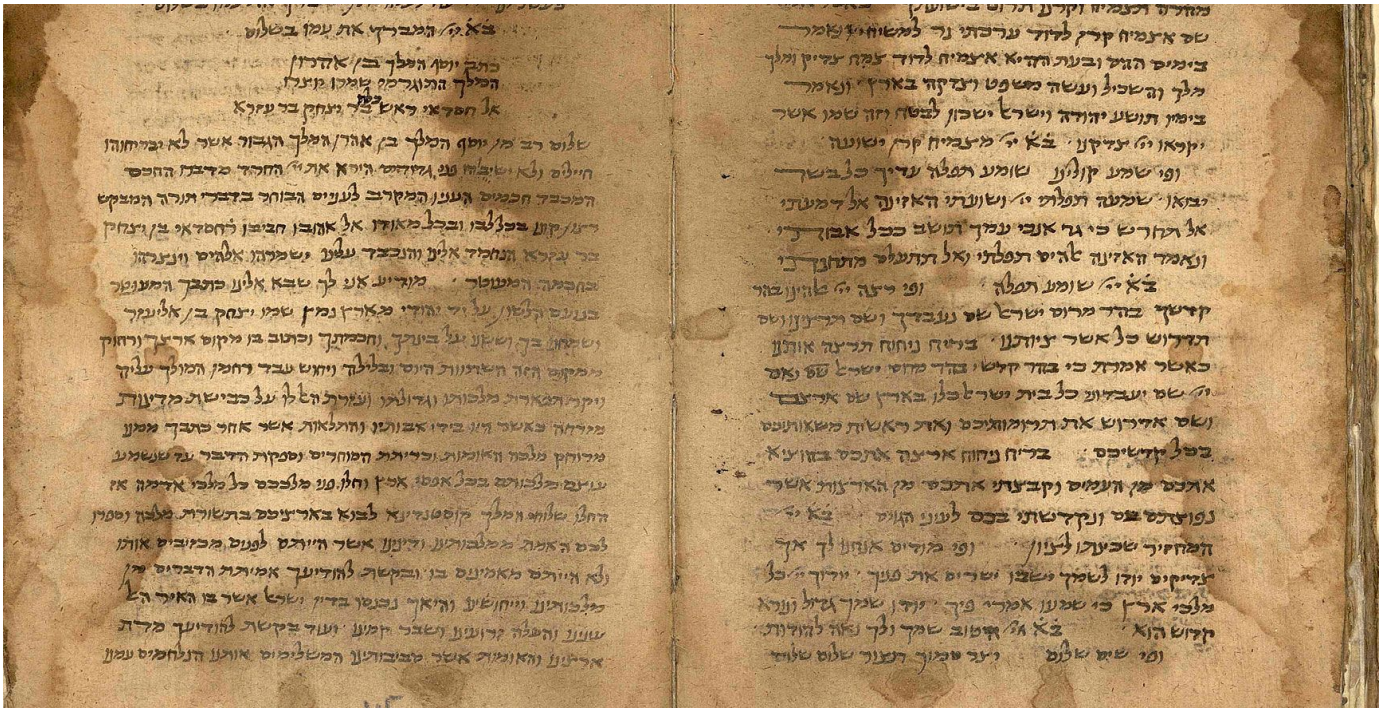
About the year 960, A prominent Spanish Jew named Hasdai ibn Shaprut (link: <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Hisdai-ibn-Shaprut>), who was the physician of Caliph Abd-ar-Rahman III, wrote a letter to the Khan of Khazars Joseph. In the letter, he first addressed himself as the confidant of the Caliph, who would receive the embassies from "the King of the Franks, the King of the Gebalim, who are Germans, the King of Constantinople, and others ". (Medieval Sourcebook: The Medieval Jewish Kingdom of the Khazars, 740-1259 (link: <https://sourcebooks.fordham.edu/source/khazars1.asp>)) The international communications from Umayyad Spain to now France, Germany and as far as Constantinople was readily revealed.



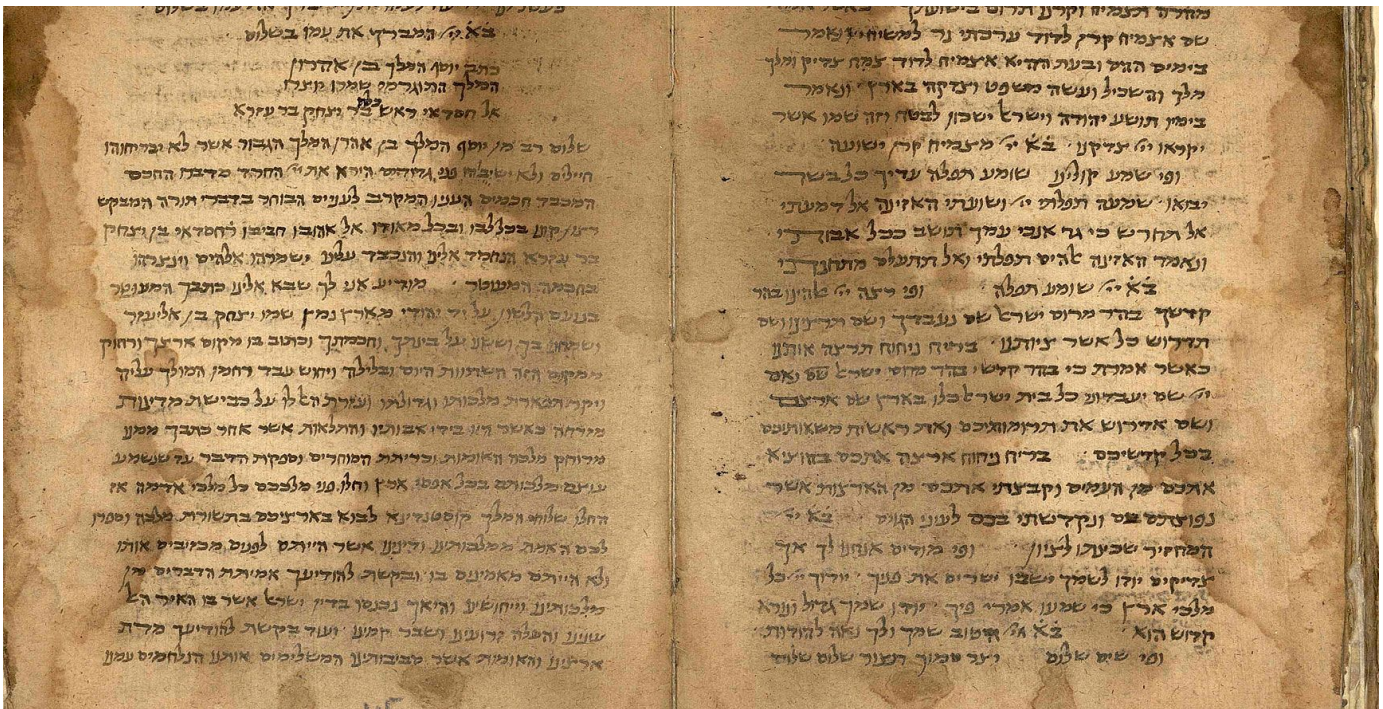
[The background image is a copy of the letter from the king of the Khazars Joseph to Hasdai ibn Shaprut]

Speaking back to the letter, Ibn Shaprut showed his concern in finding the lost ten tribes of the Israelites.

By chance, he heard about the emissaries of Khorasan told him that there is a kingdom of Jews which is called Al-Chazar. But I did not believe these words for I thought that they told me such things to procure my goodwill and favor. I was therefore wondering, till the ambassadors of Constantinople came [between 944 and 949] with presents and a letter from their king to our king, and I interrogated them concerning this matter, they answered me: "It is quite true, and the name of that kingdom is Al-Chazar. It is a fifteen days' journey by sea from Constantinople, but by land, many nations intervene between us; the name of the king now reigning is Joseph; ships sometimes come from their country to ours bringing fish, skins, and wares of every kind. The men are our confederates and are honored by us; there is communication between us by embassies and mutual gifts; they are very powerful; they maintain numerous armies with which they occasionally engage in expeditions." (Medieval Sourcebook)

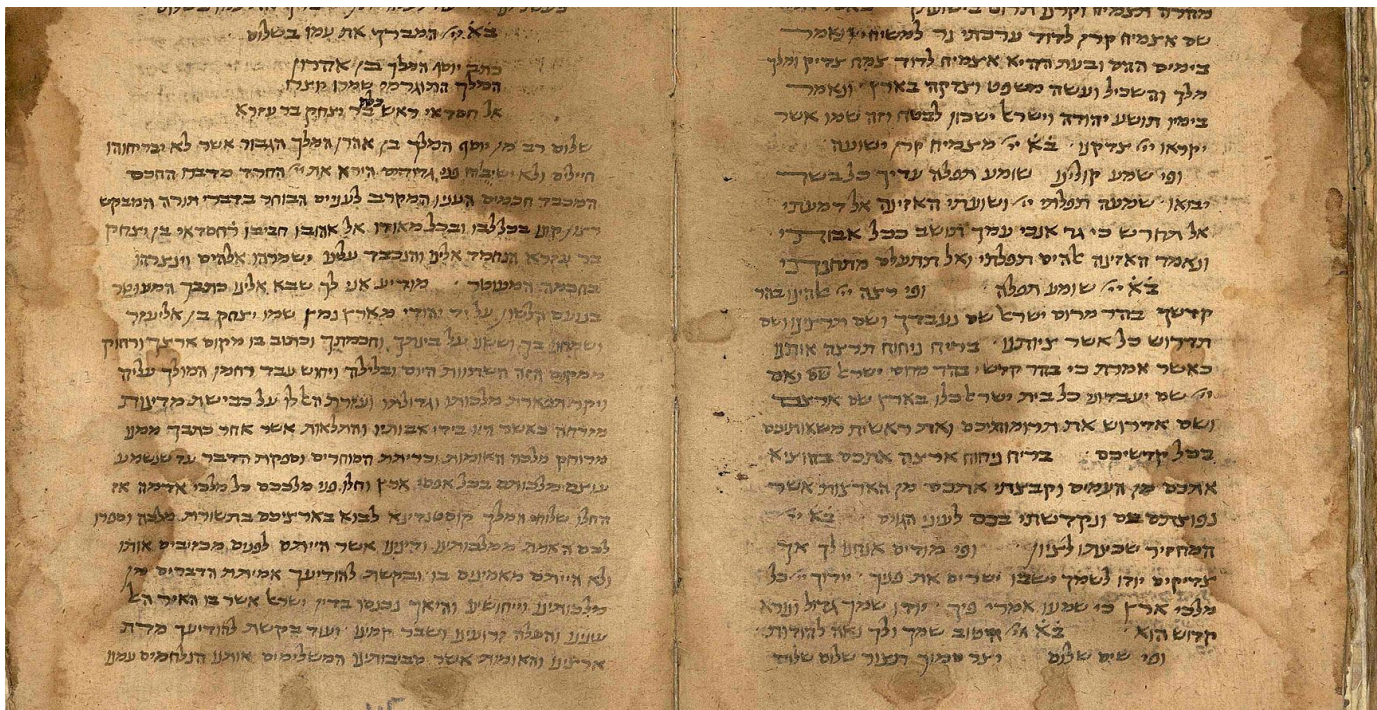


Through his lengthy description, it is not hard to see that his information about Khazaria was from both Khorasan (a land southeast of the Caspian Sea) and Constantinople, who had commercial relationships with the Khazars.



The letter that the Khan replied to him revealed more details about the communications among different places. Joseph first addressed his thanks in the following way: '...I wish to inform you that your beautifully phrased letter was given us by Isaac, son of Eliezer, a Jew of the land of Germany [Isaac carried it through Germany, Hungary, and Russia to Khazaria.]' (Medieval Sourcebook)

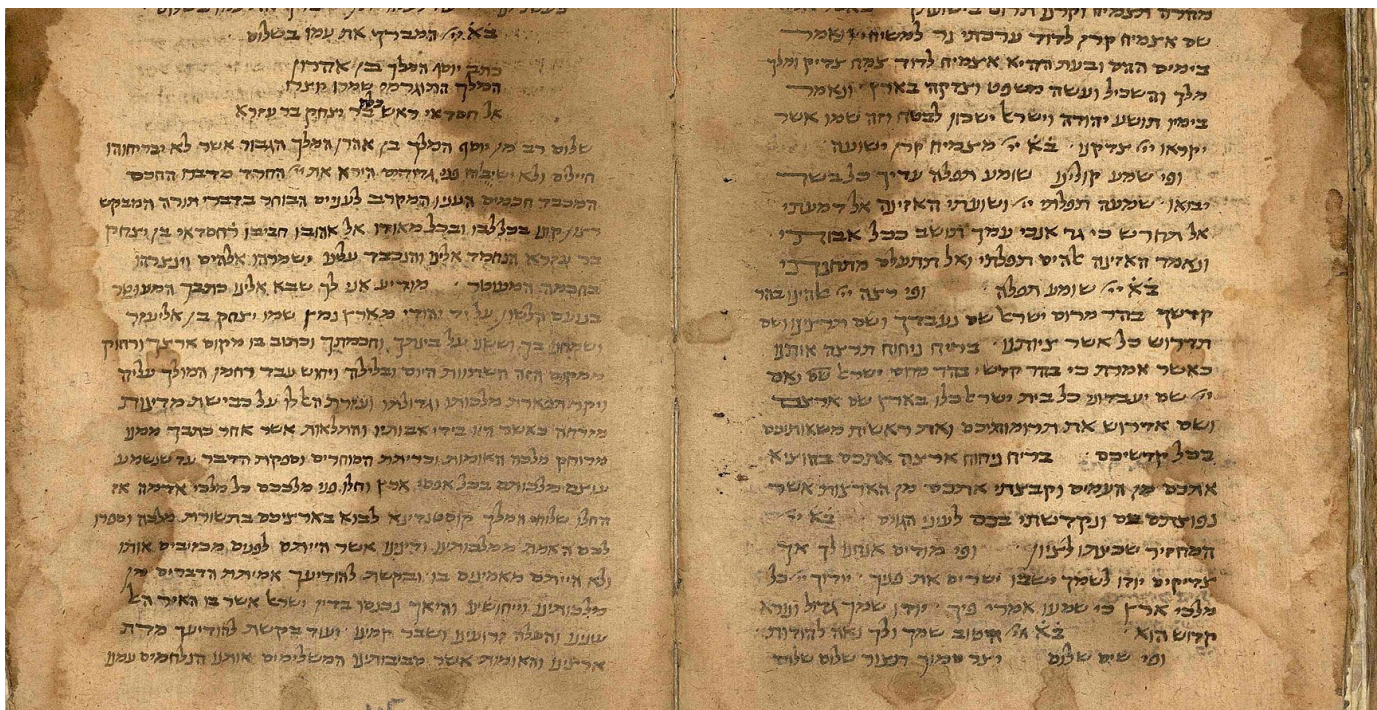
This Isaac might be a minor figure, but his feats were incredible. But this move, it is possible to think that the international Jewish communities were well connected at that period.



Joseph then described the conversion story of Bulan, the first Jewish ruler:

'He was a wise and God-fearing man, trusting in his Creator with all his heart... The king of the Byzantines and the Arabs who had heard of him sent their envoys and ambassadors with great riches and many great presents to the King as well as some of their wise men with the object of converting him to their own religion.' (Medieval Sourcebook)

The conversion story of the Khazars, although not as miraculously as that of the Keraites, has shown Khazaria influenced by at least three religions when they were about to convert - Christianity, Islam, and Judaism. By adopting the Judaism faith, Khazaria attracted a number of Jewish scholars from other places where they were suppressed.

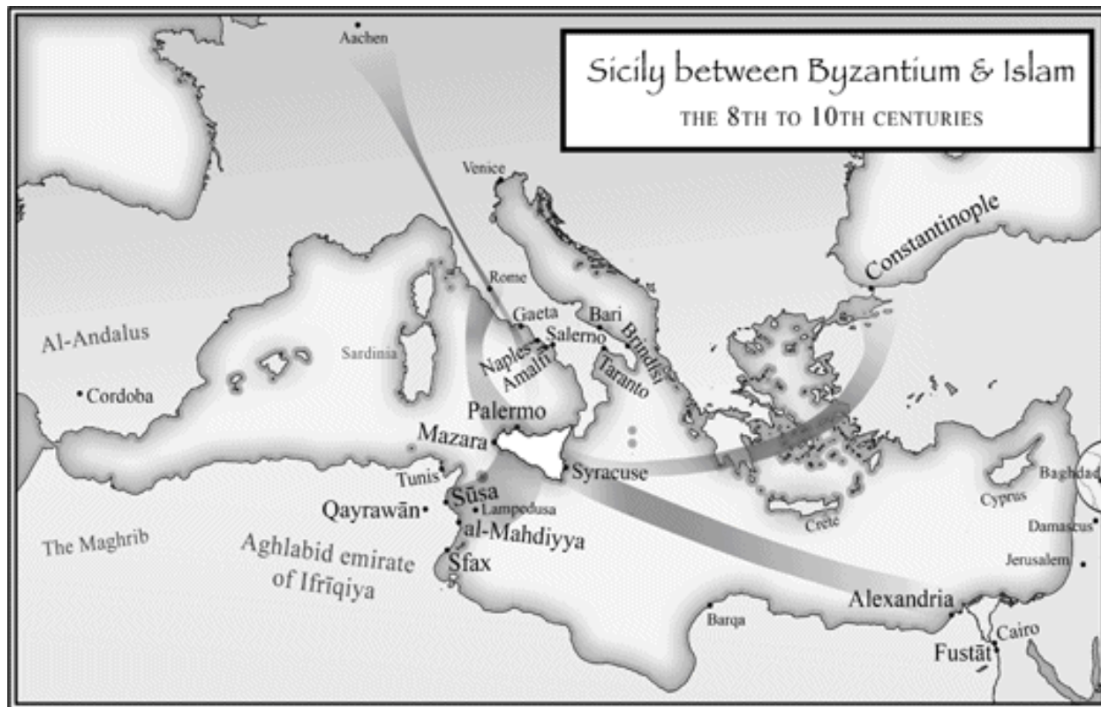


In the end, Joseph introduced his three capital cities to Hasdai, in which "Jews, Christians, and Moslems live in the second city. Besides these, there are many slaves of all nations in it." (Medieval Sourcebook) Therefore, Khazaria's internationalization is again strengthened through his words.

If you are interested in how conquest influences the human movements, please move to the next section.

Conquest

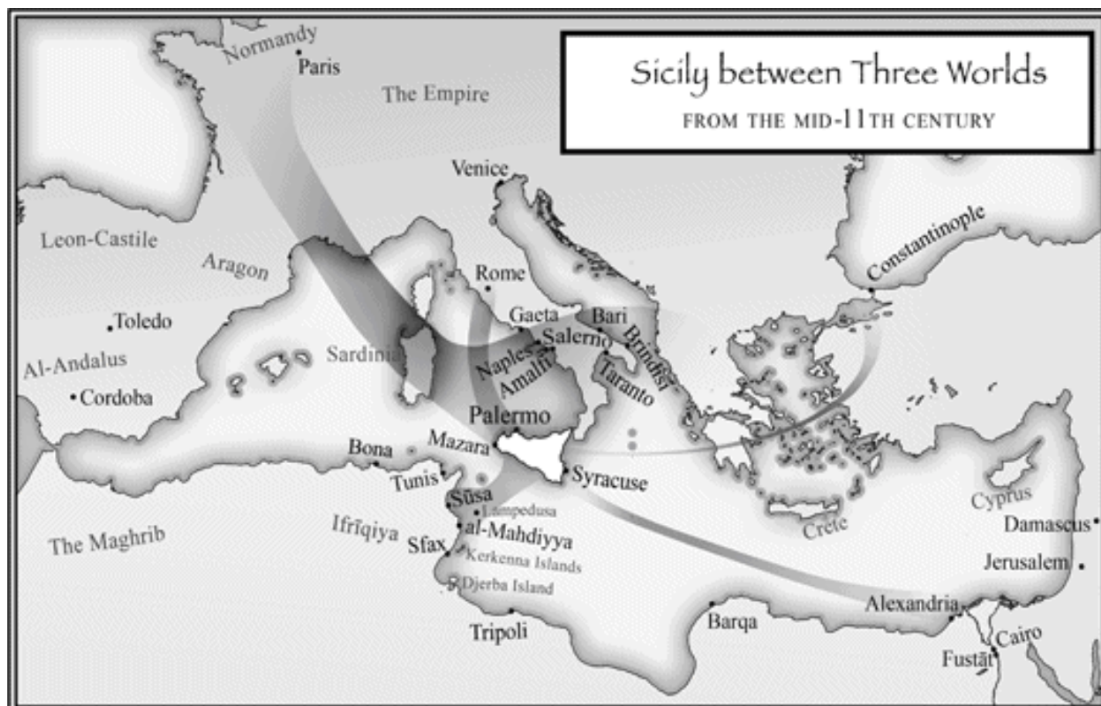
Sicily



[The image shows Sicily between three worlds, from the 8th to the 10th century]

From Emirate of Sicily to the Kingdom of Sicily

The island of Sicily, a famous tourist spot today, has a long history of international communications. In the early middle ages, Sicily was under the governance of the Byzantine Empire. From 652, Muslims constantly had conflicts with the local force and gradually controlled the island from 831 to 1091. It was subsequently conquered by Christian Normans and started the Kingdom of Sicily.



[This image shows Sicily between three worlds, from the the mid-11th century]

The frequent conquests from the outside world not only brought war and devastation to Sicily but also different religions, cultures languages and living styles. Therefore, Sicily became a divergent place for a couple of centuries and the influence under at least three cultural groups lasted until much later.



[The background image features Church of San Giovanni degli Eremiti, in Palermo, Sicily. During the Islamic occupation of Sicily, it was converted into a mosque and reconstructed with Arab features.]

Within the period which Sicily was an emirate, lots of Arab travelers and merchants visited the place and left their descriptions including Ibn Hawqal (link: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ibn_Hawqal) .

Ibn Hawqal is a merchant from Baghdad who visited Sicily in 950 and wrote what he saw in Surat al-ard (link: <https://siqilliyay.files.wordpress.com/2014/07/description-of-sicily-ibn-hawqal-vs-curiosities.pdf>) :

"Most people are bastardised Muslims (musha 'midhūn) and think it is acceptable to marry Christians on the basis that their male child follows the father by being a bastardised Muslim, while the female child becomes a Christian like her mother. They do not pray, do not perform ritual ablutions, they do not pay the alms tax nor do they go on pilgrimage to Mecca..."



Kitab Gara'ib al-funun wa-mulah al-'uyun (link: <http://muslimheritage.com/article/book-curiosities-or-medieval-islamic-view-cosmos>) (The Book of Curiosities of the Sciences and Marvels for the Eyes) in the 11 century by an anonymous writer also accounted the similar practice for the residents of Sicily.

Although Ibn Hawqal wrote the interfaith marriages in Sicily in despising, the passage nonetheless shows that after a long time occupation by Arab Muslims, the locals, mainly Catholics and Orthodox, were able to remain their faiths and lived together relatively peacefully with their Arab neighbor.

Arabs maintained their rule of the island until the Normans came under Roger Bosso, later known as Roger I of Sicily. The new Kingdom of Sicily has obtained ethnic diversity and a new Norman-Arab-Byzantine culture was evolved.



Another Arab traveler Ibn Jubair (link: <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Ibn-Jubayr>) visited Sicily at the end of the 12th century and described what he saw in this way (link: <http://www.napavalley.edu/people/shutton/Documents/Readings/Ibn%20Jubayr%20Desc%20of%20Sicily.pdf>) :

[Sicily] is populated by the worshippers of crosses who roam its hills and are safeguarded in their shelter. Muslims are among them as well, on their holdings and estates and are treated well in their employment and work, but they impose a tax on them which they render twice a year. They have come between them and the wealth of the land likely used to have. May great and almighty God improve their condition and by his kindness make everything turn out well for their property! (Medieval Italy: Texts in Translation, 234-5)

While Ibn Hawqal showed concerns over the intermarriages between Muslims and Christians, Ibn Jubair was very pleased to see the number of Muslims and other foreigners in King Roger II of Sicily's court. He wrote:

The character of this, their king is surprising, for his decent conduct, his employment of Muslims, and the use made of completely castrated slaves, all of whom, or most of whom, conceal their faith and adhere to Shari'a law of Islam. He puts a lot of trust in the Muslims, relying on them in his affairs. Important matters of business to the extent that even the supervisor of his kitchen is a Muslim. He also has a unit of black Muslim slaves whose commander is picked from among them. (Same source)

In the last sentence, "black Muslim slaves" were mentioned. Although slaves, who were very crucial in the medieval global travel stories, will not be discussed further, their appearances accompanied conquest and trade. They are important examples of how different parts of the world were connected.



Sicily, from Arab Muslim to Norman Christian occupation, showed an incredible degree of diversity:

The local population conquered by the Muslims were Romanized Catholic Sicilians in Western Sicily and Greek-speaking Byzantine Catholics mainly in the eastern half of the island, but there were also a significant number of Jews.

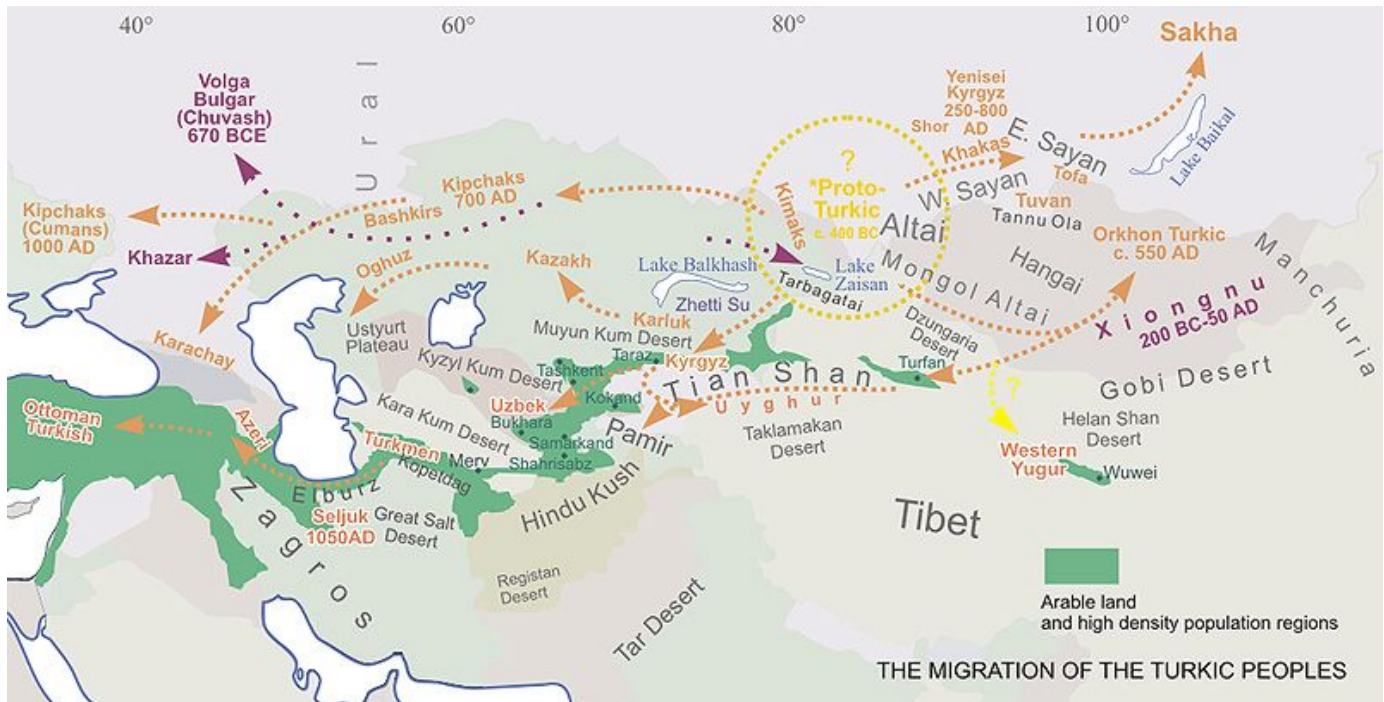
(From Islam to Christianity: the Case of Sicily, Charles Dalli, P153)

However, frictions and conflicts existed extensively in the Sicilian society as well. The rise of one ruling class means the suppressing of another group of people. Many global movements during the middle ages, just like this example, are double-edged swords. On the one side, they brought prosperity and communication, but on the other side, they brought collisions and oppression.

Please scroll down to the next section - Migration.

Migration

the Turkic Peoples



[The background image shows the migration of the Turkic Peoples from 200 BC to the 11th century]

Mass migration is also an important way that brings different people together. Turkic peoples, like other nomads, were constantly moving from one place to another from east to west. In the earliest record in China, they were referred to as 'Xiongnu'. After Han-Xiongnu war, the ancestors of Turkic peoples were forced to move westward and they gradually occupied almost the whole central Asia and were known to the west as the 'Huns'.

While the Turkic peoples continued moving toward the west, many of them converted to monotheism and abandoned their old pagan faith. Saltuk Buğra Khan of Kara-Khanid Khanate became the first Muslim Turkic ruler. Most Turkic peoples chose to become Muslims. The Khazars that before-mentioned were also Turkic, but they chose to adopt Jewish belief. Other beliefs they had included Christianity and Buddhism.

Heading into the 11th century, the Turkic peoples went into a highly developed era. They continued to conquer the lands in the west and by the end of the century, one of the most prominent groups -Seljuk Turks - landed in Anatolia and finally settled there.

Have you still remembered the city of Merw? When the conversion of the Keraites happened, the Metropolitan of Merw became the mediator between the Patriarch and the Keraites. The city of Merw was for a long time controlled by Arabs and Persians and it was a city of "delightful, fine, elegant, brilliant, extensive, and pleasant" as described by the Arab historian Al-Maqdisi during the 10th century. (The Silk Roads: A New History of the World).

The Turkic migration into Merv, led by the Seljuks, made the city remained its position as a cosmopolitan place. The warlike Seljuk Turks developed a huge empire through their migration process and they subsequently conquered the eastern part of the Abbasid Empire and finally, Anatolia of the Byzantine Empire through serious conflicts with the Byzantine armies. Seljuk Empire became the homeland to multi-nations and while different cultures interacted, Seljuk Turks became fervent supports of the Persian culture and language, and the evidence can be supported by the following words (link: <http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/sahrbanu>) :

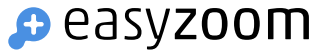
...Non-Persian dynasties such as the Ghaznavids, Seljuqs, and Ilkhanids were rapid to adopt the Persian language and have their origins traced back to the ancient kings of Persia rather than to Turkish heroes or Muslim saints.

They then imported the Persian culture into Anatolia as well. While Anatolia had been occupied by Orthodox Greek-speaking people for centuries, it was transformed into a Turkic Muslim society.

Please move on to the final category - Diplomacy/Trade.

Diplomacy/Trade

Greeks - Arabs - Chinese



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This interactive map shows the trade routes from the 11th to the 12th century. Please use the 'Zoom In' function to see the details.

International Trades, just like migrations and the spreads of religion, are an important aspect in human movements during the middle ages. Ambitious Merchants were more likely than other peoples to traveling far away from their homelands and searched for trading partners.

Trade is also closely connected to politics. Sometimes, the political relationship began because of the needs of trade. Also, while finding a new, unknown place to trade, the merchants need the consents from the local rulers first. Some merchants acted as diplomats as well, and to convey the messages from their kings to the foreign rulers.

The world had many well-established trade routes around the 11th century as the map is shown and there are definitely many interesting stories about the trade to tell. In the following space, I'll dedicate it to the stories between Byzantine Greeks and Chinese first, then Arabs and Chinese.

One of China's official history records, Sung-shih (link: <https://sourcebooks.fordham.edu/eastasia/romchin1.asp>), written in the 13th century, narrated their knowledge of Byzantine during the dynasty of Song (960-1279 C.E.):

The country of Fu-lin [Byzantium]. South-east of it you go to Mei-lu-ku [Kilikia ("Cilicia")]; north you go to the sea [Black Sea]; both forty days' journey; west you go to the sea [Mediterranean], thirty days' journey; in the east, starting from western Ta-shih, you come to Yu-tien [Khoten], Hui-ho and Ch'ing-t'ang, and finally reach Zhongguo [China]. They have during former dynasties not sent tribute to our court. During the tenth month of the fourth year of the period Yuan-feng [November, 1081 C.E.], their king, Mieh-li-i-ling-kai-sa [Michael VII Parapinaces Caesar], first sent the ta-shou-ling [a high official] Ni-si-tu-ling-si-meng-p'an to offer as tribute saddled horses, sword-blades, and real pearls. He said: the climate of this country is very cold; houses there have no tiles; the products are gold, silver, pearls, western silk cloth, cows, sheep, horses' camels with single humps, pears, almonds, dates, pa-lan [a kind of date], millet, and wheat. They

make wine from grapes; their musical instruments are the lute, the hu-ch'in [the "tea-pot-shaped lute"]; the hsiao-pi-li[a kind of flageolet]; and the p'ien-ku ["side drum"]. (East Asian History Sourcebook)

From the description, we know that when Byzantine sent an embassy to China, China showed most interests in their gifts and the products they made. The narration also shows that although they were known each other for a long time "they have during former dynasties not sent tribute to our court", they had limited contacts with each other except trades.

Moving toward the next centuries, especially after the Mongolians came out and occupied China, India, Central Asia and almost made their way to the west, had the commercial and diplomatic connections continued to develop rapidly.

Arabs established a profound trading relationship with China for a long time. Around the 11th century, China was just recovered from the collapse of the Tang dynasty and started the Song dynasty. Through the history records, the Song dynasty made more than 40 times official contacts with Arabia (The historical relationship between China and Arab nations, Weitie Zhang [In Chinese]).

In 966, a Chinese Buddhist monk Xingqin traveled west and the emperor let him brought a letter to the caliph of the Abbasid Caliphate and later sent an envoy there. Only two years later, the caliph sent his embassy to China and the event was recorded by Chinese court historians. From 968 to 1056, the Abbasid Caliphate sent roughly 17 embassies to China. (Source: Weitie Zhang)

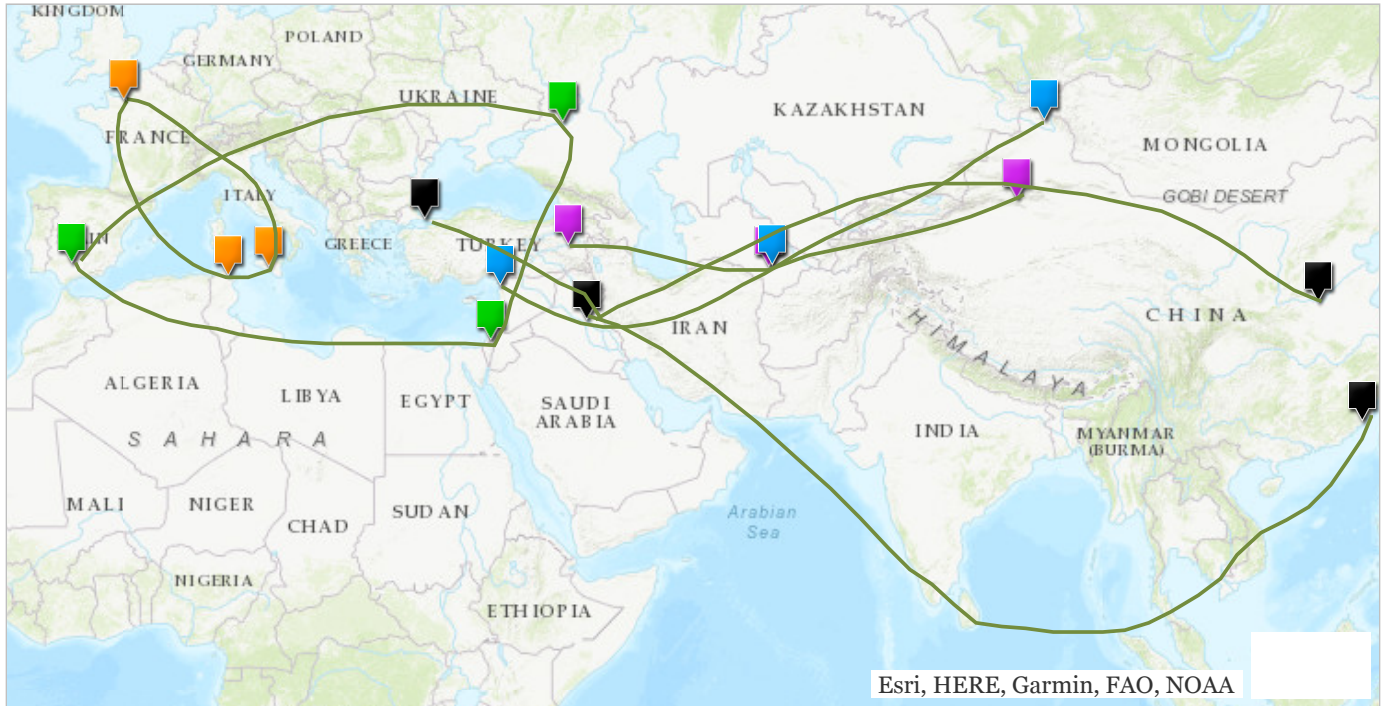


[The background image is Qingjin Temple. It was built in 1009 and is the oldest mosque that still exists today in China.]

The frequent visits between China and Arab countries are dependent on the development of seafaring technology. The ships were more capable of containing more goods and people and the use of compass made the sea routes safer. Also since the land routes to China were dangerous, the major ports in China such as Guangzhou and Quanzhou were soon developed. The international communications between Muslim Arabs and Song Chinese can also be reflected in another perspective. The records show that the number of Arabs in China was so great that they established their neighborhoods, markets, and schools. The Song government, in 1009, built Qingjing Mosque, an Arabian style building which still stands today.

Please move on to the next section - Influence.

Interaction



[The background is an interactive map shows all the before-mentioned places.]

Have you found the commonalities in the stories above?

Although they belong to different categories, they are well connected to each other. In the first example that the Mongolian Keraites converted to Nestorian Christianity, we see that religion is the outcome of international communication. However, the conversion is also related to the trades between the Christians and Keraites happened in the first place. Without these Christian merchants, the khan and other Keraites would not know the Nestorian Christianity and not feel they need to convert. In the end, the conversion, as the outcome, shows the conflicts and compromises between different cultural backgrounds. Nestorian Christianity adapted itself, through the order of the Patriarch, to better assimilate into the Keraites culture.

In the second example, similar to the Mongolian Keraits, the Khazars were originally believed in Tengrism but later were converted to the monotheism through the influence of Jews. As theorized by Omeljan Pritsak in his article titled *the Khazar kingdom's conversion to Judaism*: The religious tolerance typical of all nomadic empires is known to have existed in the Khazar state. During the first half of the tenth century, the Muslim traveler and prolific writer al-Mas'udi (link: <https://www.britannica.com/biography/al-Masudi>) confirmed its practice as follows (link: https://www.jstor-org.proxy.lib.ohio-state.edu/stable/41035790?seq=6#metadata_info_tab_contents):

The predominating element in this country[Khazaria] are the Muslims because they form the royal army. They are known in this country as Arsiyah and are immigrants from the neighborhood of Khwarizm.....They also have Muslim judges(qudat). The custom in the Khazar capital is to have seven judges. Of these, two are for the Muslims, two for the Khazars judging according to the Torah, two for those among them who are Christians judging according to the Gospel, and one for the Saqaliba, Rus and other pagans judging according to pagan law... (OMELJAN PRITSACK, P266)

The Khazars belonged to a group of Turkic peoples that migrated from east to west. Their migrations and contacts with other peoples gave them the chance to explore other religious beliefs and adopt them as their own beliefs. Forced migration was also a reason that contributed to the Khazaria's Jewishness as described the Al-Mas'udi as he singled out the Khazar state in this description (link: [http://P276,%20%20Harvard%20Ukrainian%20Studies%20%20Vol.%202,%20No.%203%20\(September%201978\),%20pp.%20261-281%20\(21%20pages\)\)](http://P276,%20%20Harvard%20Ukrainian%20Studies%20%20Vol.%202,%20No.%203%20(September%201978),%20pp.%20261-281%20(21%20pages)))) of the Caucasian peoples:

The inhabitants of this [Khazarian] capital are Muslims, Christians, Jews, and pagans. The Jews are the king (al-malik), his entourage, and the Khazars of his tribe (gins).....A number of Jews joined him from other Muslim countries and from the Byzantine Empire.

This was because the emperor, who in our time, i.e., A.H. 332/A.D. 943, is called Aramanus [Romanus I Lecapenus, 920 - 944] converted the Jews of his country to Christianity by force...and a large number of the Jews fled from Rum

In the category of conquest, the case of Sicily is discussed. Although Sicily's intercultural communications largely came from the conquests, by Arabs, Italians, and Byzantine Greeks, they not only brought war but also their "worlds" to the island of Sicily. Different cultures and beliefs existed and many people were attracted to migrate to Sicily or conduct business activities in Sicily.

The migration stories of both the Turkic and Jewish people tell us that migration is related to many other factors. The Jews were forced to move from their homelands and searched for another place to live because of their distinct belief and lifestyles. When they found a place that was willing to accept them, they soon could thrive in that community, such as the Umayyad Spain, where they entered into their golden age of development. Through migrations, the Turkic peoples, on the contrary, adapted their lifestyles and beliefs so that they could be more successful while they were moving. Their migration also accompanied various conquests toward other people and gradually, the Seljuk Turks made one of the largest empires in the world.

Trade and diplomacy are also important in stimulating international connections. The trading relationship between Romans, Arabs, and Chinese could be traced to thousands of years early. Firstly, the Silk Road was developed and then through the development of technology, Maritime Silk Road became available and connected the three continents - Asia, Africa, and Europe. Along the traditional trade routes, diplomacy is also developed among the countries along the routes. Many southeastern Asian countries made tributes regularly to China and even the Arabian Empire, the later Turkic Empire and Byzantine Empire would send embassies to the country in the far east and developed the trading relationship. In the court records of these countries, they would record each other's location, population, belief, cultures, and main products.

I would describe the world around the 11th century was experiencing a prototype of globalization. During this period of time, the need to spread religions, the need to expand the empires, the need to move massively, and the need to trade made global communications possible and more extensively than before. It also lays the foundation for the future development of international connectivity. Especially the rise of Genghis Khan and his empire forever changed the projection of world history. Legendary global travelers like Ibn Battuta and Marco Polo incited the readers' curiosity toward the other parts of the world. Especially in Europe, curiosity generally transformed into a motivation to explore the new world and started the Age of Exploration.

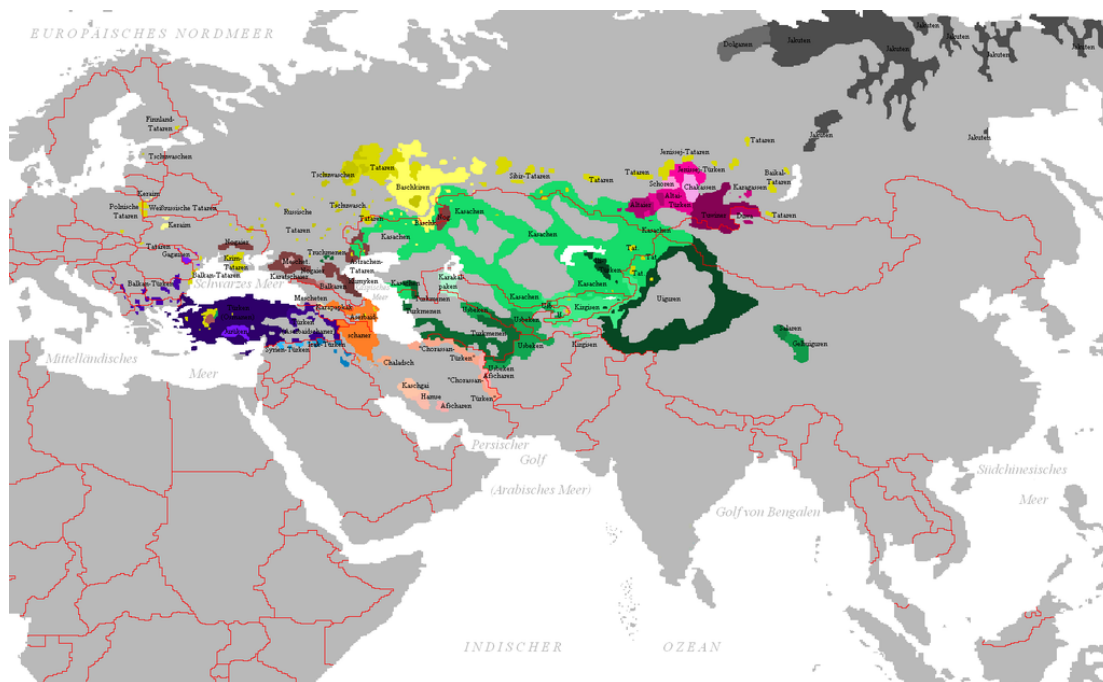
As a result, in today's world, we are much more informed about the world and others than those living in any other period of time. We also have more needs to connect with people from other parts of the world other than the four categories that I have mentioned previously.

Conclusion

Global history is a topic that our generation concern.

How the current issues can be explained by history in some ways is important in studying global travel stories. For example, at the beginning of the book *Where Three Worlds Met*, the author gave an example of the refugee crisis. Many refugees took off from the coast of Libya to the island of Sicily. She said that in today's media, Sicily is described as the "conceptual boundary...dividing the continents of Europe and Africa-or, by some, as the border between the Western world and the Islamic world". (P25) Therefore, the study of the historical status of Sicily can help both the policymakers and all others to understand the significance of the refugee crisis and work out ways to deal with it.

Another example comes from the beliefs of the Turkic peoples. Nowadays, although they mainly practice Muslims, a minority of them are Orthodox Christians, Buddhists, and Jews. By learning the history, we know that the Turkic peoples in the past practiced many kinds of beliefs, from paganism to monotheism including Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. Studying their conversion stories help us to understand that the religion they practice today had a deep root in history.



This is a map of Turkic peoples around the world today (in German). From the Balkans to the eastern Siberia, the Turkic peoples found their homes across thousands of miles.

As I was approaching the end of this project, a proverb came into my mind:

When you use history as a mirror, you can see the rise and fall.

I had not understood the meaning of the text since it was pronounced by an emperor. History, in the past, both in East and West, is a subject for the rulers. Just like in the past, the knowledge toward the other part of the world is mainly only confined to the upper class. Common people had no right to know and had nothing to do with the things happened in the past and those living far away from them.

However, in today's world, the requirements to know about the past and the others increase. Through the development of the internet, we are able to connect with every corner in the world and we receive information from all over the world through various media. Everyone is able to know the other and defines themselves through this process.

Knowing the past is a good way to address the concerns when we face the new tides of globalization. Global human movements define our cultures, faiths, economic activities through time. Humans, goods, ideas are constantly in move helps us to understand the current situation.

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Thanks for watching!